

Message Text

SECRET

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TO WHITE HOUSE IMMEDIATE

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NODIS

FOR BRZEZINSKI ONLY

FOLLOWING REPEAT DAMASCUS 0673 ACTION SECSTATE 01 FEB 78

QUOTE

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 0673

NODIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4

TAGS: PEPR, PLO, SY, EG, US

SUBJECT: CURRENT FATAH ATTITUDE TOWARD EGYPT, SYRIA AND US

1. SYRIAN TAPLINE REPRESENTATIVE MAHMOUD AL-YOUSSEF CALLED ON CHARGE FEB. 1 TO RECOUNT CONVERSATION HE HAD HAD PREVIOUS EVENING WITH FATAH LEADERS KHALID AND HANI AL A HASSAN (TO WHOM HE IS RELATED BY MARRIAGE). THEY HAD JUST RETURNED FROM ALGIERS AND WERE DEPLORING POSITION OF MODERATES WITHIN PLO. THEY SAID THAT SADAT HAD REJECTED MAINTAINING SECRET CONTACT WITH PLO, INSISTING THAT ANY CONTACT BE OPEN AND PUBLICIZED. THIS PLO COULD
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NOT DO AT PRESENT BECAUSE OF NECESSITY TO REMAIN ON GOOD TERMS WITH SYRIA.

2. AL-YOUSSEF ALSO RECOUNTED THAT DURING PLO DISCUSSION IN LATE 1977 AS TO WHETHER THEY WOULD ACCEPT SADAT'S INVITATION TO ATTEND CAIRO CONFERENCE, A HIGH SYRIAN OFFICIAL HAD URGED THEM TO ATTEND IN ORDER TO CONFRONT

ISRAEL WITH CHOICE OF SITTING WITH PLO OR NOT
ATTENDING. THEY HAD LEARNED THROUGH THEIR INTELLIGENCE
SOURCES, HOWEVER, THAT SYRIANS WERE PLANNING TO USE
THEIR ATTENDANCE AS EXCUSE FOR NEW CLAMP DOWN ON
PALESTINIAN OFFICES AND FACILITIES IN LEBANON AND
SYRIA; THIS HAD BEEN THE CLINCHER IN PERSUADING THEM
NOT TO GO, NOT THE PUBLICIZED "REJECTIONIST" REASONS.

3. AL-YOUSSEF SAID BOTH FATAH MEMBERS HAD TOLD HIM
THEY WOULD WELCOME DISCUSSIONS WITH USG, EITHER DIRECTLY
OR THROUGH PRIVATE INTERMEDIARIES. THIS HAD BEEN
TRANSMITTED THROUGH SAUDI PRINCE FAHD LAST SUMMER BUT
US HAD NOT RESPONDED. CHARGE REPLIED WITH STANDARD
GUIDANCE POINTING OUT THAT PLO HAD MISSED MANY
OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH ITS INABILITY TO FIND A WAY TO
SAY IT WAS READY TO ACCEPT AND COEXIST WITH STATE OF
ISRAEL IN THE MIDDLE EAST. AL-YOUSSEF SAID HE HAD TOLD
THEM THIS WAS US POLICY AND WOULD NOW BE ABLE TO CONFIRM
IT. HE OFFERED TO ACT AS A GO-BETWEEN IF USG EVER FELT
THIS WOULD BE USEFUL.

4. COMMENT: FOREGOING CONFIRMS DILEMMA OF PLO MODERATES
WHO WANT TO MAINTAIN CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION WITH SADAT
BUT FEEL INHIBITED BY THEIR PRESENT DEPENDENCE ON SYRIA
FROM DOING SO OPENLY. CONVERSATION ALSO REVEALS GREAT
MISTRUST THESE FATAH LEADERS HAVE OF SYRIA AND ITS REAL
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INTENTIONS TOWARD PLO.
PELLETREAU
UNQUOTE VANCE".

SECRET

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